



# Wild News

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Prince William Wildflower Society  
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Number 2025-02

July - August 2025

**Prince William Wildflower Society**  
**Membership Meeting, Monday, July 21, 7:30 pm**  
**Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas**

Join us to hear Native Plants Landscape Designer Stephanie Johnson, owner of *Green Steeze*, talk about her great passion and the work of her business — installing native gardens for her customers. Not for the faint of heart, her landscaping work is physical and demanding as she faces the challenges of removing what isn't working and replacement with native plants, shrubs and trees that are more beneficial to the environment as well as being beautiful, functional, and more suited to our local climate and soil. [greensteeze.com](http://greensteeze.com)

Her message, pure and simply: "Please encourage your neighborhood to plant native trees for clean water, air, climate & habitat."

Quick Links to:

[Free Trees](#)

[Native Plant Nursery](#)

[Community Resources](#)



## Upcoming Events

\* Monday, August 18, at 9 am.  
Prince William Wildflower Society will hold a botanical walk at Deep Cut, Manassas Battlefield led by naturalist Charles Smith, former PWWS president. The parking lot is on the north side of Lee Highway, about one mile down Featherbed Lane and on the left. For additional information, contact Marion Lobstein, PWWS Botany Chair at [mblobstein@earthlink.net](mailto:mblobstein@earthlink.net).

\* For upcoming VNPS chapter events, please continue to check local chapters' "Events".  
<https://vnps.org/chapters/>

\* Consider becoming a Friend of the Clifton Institute, Fauquier County, to enjoy the various walks and events they hold on a regular basis.  
<https://cliftoninstitute.org>

## President's Column and Photographs



Summer is in full swing with its hot, humid days and sultry nights. One big change from last year has been our abundant

rain. My yard is an absolute jungle, and I haven't had the energy to tame it a bit. I'm pleased that the lightning bugs enjoy it, and I just recently heard my first katydids of the season. Out at Huntley Meadows Park in Fairfax County, a park I visit every Monday morning, the glorious Swamp Rose-mallows, *Hibiscus moscheutos*, are in full bloom and make a spectacular showing across the wetland. Here in Prince William County, they are abundant along the Neabsco Creek Boardwalk. (pictured)

Summer is the time for sunny, colorful meadows, and PWWS has its annual walk at Deep Cut in Manassas Battlefield scheduled for Monday, August 18. Ecologist (and past PWWS president) Charles Smith will lead, and Marion Lobstein will greet participants with checklists she has compiled over the years.

We had a couple of big events since my last column, and one was our annual native plant sale. While our volunteers were as helpful and hardworking as ever under the leadership of plant sale chair Nancy Arrington, and the weather cooperated, we were disappointed with the sales. Always held the day before Mother's Day (for more than 40 years!), our sale usually turns out throngs of people lined

up at the start of the sale. The crowd was much smaller this year, and overall attendance was down. We did worry that we had fewer plants available, but we had plenty left over, surprisingly. We held an after-action meeting by Zoom and discussed the past and future of our plant sales. We concluded that



we would take a break in 2026 and have a bigger and better sale in 2027. We have enough of a cushion in reserves that we do not need the plant sale revenue to balance our budget next year.

Another big event was the annual Manassas Bee Festival. Under the leadership of education chair Lois Montgomery, our booth was a very successful attraction again. Children read nature books and picked a prize, and adults purchased the Plant NOVA Natives guide and picked from a variety of informational brochures and VNPS stickers. Vice president Val Neitzey generously shared native plant seeds, and we sold a few

plants that were left over from our May sale. Many thanks to the other volunteers as well: Brian McDougal and Tim Rook (who helped with setup), and Brigitte Hartke, Karen Waltman, and Janet Wheatcraft. I was there with my "Square" app on my phone to take credit card sales. Secretary Janine Lawton helped staff the Master Naturalists' booth. Our next major tabling event will be the Fall Festival at Leopold's Preserve on September 20.

Our meeting this month features a program by native plant landscape designer and entrepreneur Stephanie Johnson, owner of *Green Steeze*. Stephanie is passionate about native plants and their use in garden landscapes. As a volunteer, she has partnered with the Prince William Conservation Alliance in invasive plant removal efforts at Veteran's Park in Woodbridge. I hope that many of you can join us at our meeting at 7:30 p.m. on July 21 at Bethel Lutheran Church. Invite friends and neighbors!

~ Nancy



Once again, Lois Montgomery's "Read a book, pick a toy" blanket was a popular attraction with many young festival participants.



## *Blandy Experimental Farm State Arboretum of Virginia in Images*

What's blooming at Blandy these days? Native Trumpet Honeysuckle, Lupines, Monkeyflower, Scarlet Beebalm and Monarda, Phlox, and Butterfly-weed; Coneflower, Black Cohosh, Coreopsis and many other delights were captured by Nancy Vehrs on her recent working visit to Blandy Farm. Below, enjoy a beautiful mosaic of photographs that showcase some of the beautiful mid-summer plants in bloom now. Less than an hour from Manassas, it's definitely worth the drive — what better way to spend a lazy summer morning or afternoon. Thank you, Nancy, for taking us along.

*All photos on pages 2 and 3 were taken by Nancy Vehrs, excepting her profile photo.*





## Black Cohosh or Bugbane is now *Actaea racemosa* rather than *Cimicifuga racemosa*

Marion Lobstein  
PWWS Botany Chair  
Professor Emeritus NVCC

*Actaea racemosa*, formerly *Cimicifuga racemosa*, commonly called Black cohosh or Bugbane, is a perennial member of the Ranunculaceae or Buttercup Family. This handsome plant that has a less-than-pleasant fragrance is more common in the mountains of Virginia but certainly can be found in rich woods in the Northern Virginia area. The stems and leaves of this plant appear in the spring and may easily be confused with Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), a member of the Berberidaceae or Barberry Family. The long (up to 12 inches), slender wand-like inflorescences of small white flowers appear by June, and plants may bloom into August. This species is found in rich open woods as well as shaded woodland borders and roadsides. The range of this species is from Massachusetts south into Georgia, and west into Ohio and Tennessee. *Actaea* is the genus to which Linnaeus assigned this species in his 1753 *Species Plantarum*. The origin of *Actaea* is from the first century Roman Pliny the Elder who used the term to describe a species of European elderberry. The former genus name of *Cimicifuga* is from the Latin "cimex" for bug and "fugare" meaning to drive away, referring to the pungent odor that may drive some insects away - thus the name bugbane. The species name of *racemosa* refers to the raceme type of inflorescence typical of this species. Other common names are Black Cohosh (cohosh refers to the dark, rough rhizome of the plant),

Black Snakeroot, and Squawroot (the last two common names alluding to the Indian use of this species to treat snakebites and female reproductive system issues, respectively).

The flowers of Black Cohosh are small (only around 1/4 inch or less long) with 4 to 5 sepals and are shed soon after the flower opens - no petals but 1 to 8 white petaloid stamens, numerous showy white stamens, and 1 to 2 carpels with short styles and broad stigmas. The flowers lack nectar but present a good pollen reward to its insect pollinators which are usually flies but may also be bees and bumblebees. The pungent fragrance is thought to attract flies but repel many other types of insects. The fruit that develops from each fertilized flower is a follicle that is a 1/4 to 1/3 inch long that contains two rows of small reddish-brown seeds. The dried fruits may remain on the plant unopened until early winter, and the seeds may rattle within the fruit when shaken by wind or passing animals. Other less common names for this plant due to this characteristic are Rattletop, Rattleweed, or Rattle Snakeroot. Black Cohosh is also the host plant of Appalachian Azure butterfly.



Each plant has a slender stem that may be up to 6 or more feet tall with alternate thrice-compounded leaves with 2 to 5 coarsely toothed leaflets that are up to 6 inches long and with up to 7 subdivisions. Each mature plant has a well-developed, dark-

colored and rough-textured rhizome with short fibrous roots. The rough and gnarled appearance of the rhizome is due to scars of leaf stems from previous years of growth. By the end of the growing season, pinkish buds for next season's growth may be seen on the rhizome.

The medicinal uses of this plant by Native American tribes as well as in folk or herbal medicine are numerous. These medicinal uses (mainly of the rhizome) ranged from treating sore throats, bronchitis, coughs, colds, whooping cough, malaria, yellow fever, smallpox, measles, cholera, headaches, fatigue, hysteria, hives, itching, kidney problems, arthritis, rheumatism, snakebite (as a poultice), high blood pressure, and female problems such as childbirth. Extracts from this plant were used for pain of menstrual cramps and is thought to have anti-inflammatory (salicylates, the active ingredient of aspirin, are found in the plant), antispasmodic, sedative (even slightly narcotic), diuretic, and expectorant properties. It was not only important in Native American medicine but also was listed in the *U.S. Pharmacopeia* from 1820 to 1936 and in the *National Formulary* from 1936 to 1950. Black Cohosh was also introduced in Europe in the 1700s where it was grown for its medicinal and ornamental properties. Today it is used primarily as a herbal remedy to treat menopause symptoms.

Despite the less-than-pleasant odor of this attractive summer wildflower species, enjoy the beauty of black cohosh in rich woods in our area. The delicate wand-like inflorescences of this native species add interest during the summer months.

**NOTE:** Black Cohosh was the VNPS "2017 Wildflower of the Year".



## Ranunculaceae and Black Cohosh Taxonomic Overviews

Ranunculaceae, the buttercup family, was described by A.L. de Jussieu in 1789. The family name Ranunculaceae is based on the genus *Ranunculus*, the buttercups or crowfoots. European species of *Ranunculus* were used since ancient times to create blistering to treat wounds or inflammation.

European species of *Aconitum* (Monk's hood) and *Delphinium* (larkspur) as well as other species in this family were also known in ancient times as well by herbalists in Europe such as Nicholas Culpeper. The genus *Ranunculus* is derived from the Latin word rana, meaning frog. One possible explanation is that many buttercups are found in wet areas where there are frogs. The Ranunculaceae name also was assigned by A.L. de Jussieu in 1789. Earlier botanists, such as John Ray recognized this family in the 1600s and Pierre Magnol in the 1700s. World-wide, Ranunculaceae includes roughly 60 genera and 2,400 species. In the *Flora Virginia* 1762 edition, John Clayton included over 25 species of Ranunculaceae. In the *Flora of Virginia* App there are 16 genera and 62 species treated in Ranunculaceae.

Ranunculaceae species with taxonomic changes in the *Flora of Virginia* (2012) manual that are changed in the *Flora of Virginia* App include:

Larkspur (*Delphinium ajacis*) was *Consolida ajacis* in Manual but is *Delphinium ajacis* in App

Round-leaf Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) was *Anemone americana* in Manual but is *Hepatica americana* in App

Sharp-leaf Hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*) was *Anemone acutiloba* in Manual but is *Hepatica americana* in App

Ranunculaceae species taxonomic changes in the *Flora of Virginia* (2012) manual maintained in the *Flora of Virginia* App include:



Common Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) is *Actaea racemosa*

Appalachian black cohosh (*Cimicifuga rubrifolia*) is *Actaea rubrifolia*

Mountain black cohosh (*Cimicifuga americana*) is *Actaea podocarpa*

Rue-anemone (*Anemonella thalictroides*) is *Thalictrum thalictroides*

False Rue-anemone (*Isophyrum biteratum*) is *Enemion biteratum*

Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) now *Ficaria verna*

Golden-seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) traditionally in Ranunculaceae is now in Hydrastidaceae

In the *Flora of Virginia* manual as well as the App, the genus *Actaea* now includes Common Black Cohosh formerly *Cimicifuga racemosa* and two other species of Black Cohosh not found in our area, Appalachian Black Cohosh *Actaea rubrifolia* (formerly *Cimicifuga rubrifolia*) and Mountain Black Cohosh *Actaea podocarpa* (formerly *Cimicifuga americana*). Linnaeus assigned the binomium *Actaea racemosa* to *Cimicifuga racemosa* in his 1753. The genus name *Actaea* originated with Pliny the Elder in Roman times to describe a species of elder. The other *Actaea* species is *Actaea pachypoda*, White Baneberry or Doll's-Eyes. The berries of Doll's-Eyes are poisonous but were once used in home-made dolls.

*Cimicifuga racemosa* was introduced by Thomas Nuttall in 1818. The primary basis for his splitting the genus *Cimicifuga* from *Actaea* was the dry fruit of species assigned to in this genus versus fleshy berries of *Actaea* species such as *Actaea pachypoda*, White Baneberry or Doll's Eyes. There are 10-12 synonyms including *Cimicifuga americana* for *Actaea racemosa*.

There has been quite a bit of back and forth on the taxonomy of the genus *Cimicifuga*, but DNA studies support returning Virginia's three former species of *Cimicifuga* to the genus *Actaea*. What seems to be a change is now returning these species to Linnaeus' original genus.

(Photo by W. John Hayden)

## The PWWS May 19 Membership Meeting Minutes

On Monday May 19, 2025, the Prince William Wildflower Society met at the Bethel Lutheran Church in Manassas, VA. Nancy Vehrs, PWWS President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Announcements: Lois Montgomery is looking for volunteers for the Manassas Bee Festival, on June 21st. Treasurer's Report, Financial report-April 2025 is \$3,941.35 (checking) and \$3,747.18 (savings). This does not include the plant sale. The plant sale had low attendance this year. Netted \$2,385.83. Only had 66 tickets written, and usually we have over 100 tickets written. Nancy Arrington has asked people's opinions,

and we've compiled it into a document; we will have a meeting about improving the plant sale.

Marion Lobstein told us about the SEAS, Student Environmental Action Showcase. Osborne HS won 1st place, and students used drones to drop seed bombs. Gar-Field HS won 2nd place, with a wildflower meadow, and 3rd place was Ellis Elementary.

The evening's speaker was ecologist Jim McGlone speaking on the topic of "Why Trees Are Not a Clade".. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

~ Janine Lawton, Secretary

### Updating "Botanizing with Marion"

Marion Lobstein, PWWS Botany Chair, is working with the current VNPS David Gorsline to update the links and add content to the "Botanizing with Marion" website <https://vnps.org/botanizing-with-marion/>.

Links to articles from the last issues of *Wild News* are being

added as well as links to Native Plant Profiles in *Wild News* issues from 1982-2008 have been added. When you visit the Native Plant Profiles or Botany and Taxonomy categories of the website, you can search these by Sortable Date or by Subject. If you tap on the Subject choice, the names of the native plants covered will appear in alphabetical order. Plans to add

additional information under Projects is also making progress.

Marion is grateful to former VNPS webmaster Mark Murphy for all his work in setting up this website. She appreciates the cooperation of David Gorsline in updating the website Botanizing and keeping it current.

Keep checking "with Marion" for current and future updates.





## PWWS Participation in the 1st Annual Student Environmental Action Showcase

Marion Lobstein, PWWS Botany Chair

To celebrate Earth Week, the Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) on April 24, 2025 held the first annual PWCS Student Environmental Action Showcase (SEAS). At this event, more than 80 student projects were presented by over 250 PWCS students. In addition, 30 expo tables were hosted by 30 environmental sustainability community partners. This event was open to the public and was well attended by families of participants, students, and community members. PWWS was a sponsor of this event with an expo table and awarded four projects with a Prince William Wildflower Society Native Plant Project Award.

Photographs courtesy of Diane Liga



High School First Place Award Winners  
Osborn Park High School  
Project: "Seed Cyclone: Accessible aerial reforestation"  
Presenters: Aiden, Caiden, and Adit



Val Neitzey hosting the PWWS Expo Table



Elementary/Middle School First Place Award Winners  
Ashland Elementary School  
Project: "Learning in the Garden"  
Presenters: Addie, Caiden, and Raegan

Elementary/Middle School Second Place Award Winners  
Ellis Elementary School  
Project: "Our School Garden"  
Presenter: Gianna



High School Second Place Award Winners  
Gar-Field High School  
Project: "Gar-Field Meadow Garden"  
Presenter: John (upper right in photo)

# Prince William Wildflower Society

A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

P.O. Box 83, Manassas, Virginia 20108-0083



**Next Meeting: Monday, July 21 at 7:30 pm**

**Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, 8712 Plantation Lane, Manassas**

**“Local Entrepreneur and Landscape Designer Stephanie Johnson  
will talk about Native Garden Landscaping”**

**An Excerpt From Environment  
Virginia, 25 March 2025**

## **Invasive plants will soon be labeled in Virginia (in stores in 2027)**

Gov. Youngkin has signed a bill to require many invasive plant species to be labeled in stores. Invasive plant species harm the environment and ultimately cost Virginia \$1 billion annually.

Gardeners will be able to make informed decisions regarding their plant purchases and better protect pollinators.

The legislation, [HB 1941](#) from Del. Holly Seibold House Bill 1941 and [SB 1166](#) from Sen. Saddam Salim, D-Fairfax enjoyed bipartisan support in the General Assembly. The law will go into effect in 2027.

Why it matters: Many plants were brought to Virginia from other parts of the world. Some were accidentally brought over while others were brought as ornamental or decorative plants. Many of these non native plants are also extremely invasive.

The list of plants included in the legislation does not include every invasive species found in Virginia. It does include 39 of the worst offenders and species that can be commonly found in stores like english ivy, Bradford pear trees and periwinkle. Oftentimes, gardeners purchase these plants without knowing the damage they cause to the environment as a whole or the extent of their impact on their property and neighborhood.

When a neighbor plants an invasive species, it often finds a way to spread into nearby yards, parks and natural areas causing an

unintended community problem. Even if an invasive plant seems to be in control in a yard, it can spread by seed or runner roots and slowly the plant continues to pop up all around.

The problem is most people simply do not know if the plant they are buying is harmful or not. Many assume if something was harmful, it would not be offered at the store. Labeling invasive species and displaying educational signs will give well intentioned gardeners the information they need to make an informed decision. Ready to start using more native plants in your gardening? Check out our [native garden beginners guide!](#)

Virginia Nursery and Landscaping Association [maintains a list](#) of nurseries that sell native plants.